

The Development of Modern Islamic Thought in Aceh: Islamic Communication, Social Transformation, and Community Engagement

Muhammad Furqan^{1✉}, Azkal Azkia², M. Daffa³, Rika Juliana⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

Correspondence Email : muhammadfurqannew@gmail.com✉

Abstract:

This article aims to examine the dynamics of contemporary Islamic thought in Indonesia by highlighting the contestation between traditionalism, modernism, and fundamentalism in Islamic intellectual history. These three currents of thought reflect the response of Indonesian Muslims to social, political, and cultural changes, as well as the challenges of globalization and modernity. Traditionalism seeks to preserve the legacy of classical scholars and religious practices rooted in local traditions. Modernism seeks to reinterpret Islamic texts to suit scientific developments and the demands of the times. Meanwhile, fundamentalism emphasizes the purification of Islamic teachings by returning to the Qur'an and Hadith in a textual and strict manner. This study uses a library research method with a descriptive-qualitative approach, namely reviewing various relevant literature related to the development of Islamic thought in Indonesia. The results of the study indicate that (1) the emergence of these three currents of thought cannot be separated from historical dynamics, such as colonialism, the development of Islamic education, and the process of global modernization that influences the socio-religious structure of Indonesian Muslim society. (2) The contestation between traditionalism, modernism, and fundamentalism is not always conflictual, but also produces dialogue and intellectual dialectics that enrich the treasury of Islamic thought in Indonesia. The interaction of these three currents shapes the face of Indonesian Islam, which is plural, dynamic, and adaptive to changing times, both in education, politics, and socio-religious life. This study concludes that the dynamics of contemporary Islamic thought are a complex historical process, in which these three main currents interact to shape Islamic discourse in Indonesia. The novelty of this research lies in its analytical emphasis on the patterns of contestation and dialectics between traditionalism, modernism, and fundamentalism in shaping the construction of Indonesian Islamic thought in a more integrative and contextual manner.

Keywords: Contemporary Islam, Traditionalism, Modernism, Fundamentalism, Indonesia.

Introduction

Aceh is a region in Indonesia with a long history of Islamic development and is known as a region that, from the very beginning, served as the center of the spread of Islam in the archipelago. This historical journey not only shaped the religious identity of the Acehnese people but also gave rise to a strong

Islamic intellectual tradition through educational institutions such as *dayah* (Islamic boarding schools) and a network of *ulama* (Islamic scholars) that spread as far as the Middle East. Throughout its development, Aceh became a crucial space for the birth of various Islamic ideas, which continued to develop from the classical period to the modern era. The changing times, marked by the introduction of modernization and globalization, significantly influenced the Acehnese way of thinking in understanding Islamic teachings, resulting in a shift from traditional thought patterns to more open and contextual thinking in response to the challenges of the times (Hasanah, 2024). The development of Islamic philosophy in Aceh was fundamentally linked to the influence of Islamic academics with intellectual affiliations with Islamic educational centers in the Middle East, particularly Mecca and Cairo. These scholars introduced several concepts of Islamic reform, including the rationalization of religious teachings, overhauling the education system, and enhancing Islamic understanding in line with contemporary developments, while maintaining the core principles of *sharia*.

This idea then developed in Aceh through the process of *da'wah* (Islamic preaching), education, and the establishment of modern educational institutions that began to integrate religious learning systems with general knowledge. Furthermore, the presence of religious organizations such as Muhammadiyah and the Aceh Ulema Association (PUSA) also accelerated the transformation of modern Islamic thought in Aceh through a more structured education system and a socio-religious approach that was more adaptive to societal changes (Yusra, 2023). In addition to educational factors and the role of Islamic organizations, the social and political conditions in Aceh also significantly contributed to the development of modern Islamic thought. Several significant events, including the prolonged war, the official implementation of Islamic governance, and post-tsunami reconstruction efforts in 2004, influenced the dynamics that developed in Acehnese society. In this context, Islam is viewed not only as a religious ritual but also as a value system that regulates the broader social, economic, and political aspects of society.

The interaction between traditional values and contemporary concepts has given rise to a distinctive framework of Islamic thought in Aceh, where both elements coexist and adapt, shaping the community's Islamic identity and making it more dynamic and responsive to evolving circumstances (Maulana, 2021). Advances in digital technology and globalization in the modern era have intensified shifts in Acehnese perceptions of Islam. The availability of various sources of information through digital media has facilitated public exposure, particularly among young people, to diverse perspectives on Islam globally. This has encouraged a critical, open, and adaptive approach to understanding religious doctrine, while simultaneously expanding the scope of Islamic

discourse in the digital public sphere. This modernization trend has created problems by altering traditional values that have historically been integral to the cultural and Islamic identity of the Acehnese people. Therefore, a study of the history of modern Islamic thought in Aceh is crucial for understanding how this transformation process has unfolded historically, socially, and intellectually in response to the dynamics of the modern era (Rizky, 2023).

The novelty of this article lies in its discussion, which focuses not only on the history of the development of modern Islamic thought in Aceh as a stand-alone intellectual process but also integrates a broader and more in-depth analysis of the relationship between the transformation of Islamic thought and the social, educational, and cultural changes of Acehnese society in the face of global modernization. This study emphasizes that the development of modern Islamic thought in Aceh is not simply the result of adopting ideas from abroad, but rather a complex dialectical process between strong local Acehnese traditions and the influence of Islamic thought from the Middle East and the increasingly intense dynamics of globalization. Thus, modern Islamic thought in Aceh is not understood as something that replaces older traditions, but as a process of adaptation that produces a new form of Islamic understanding that is more contextual, flexible, and relevant to the needs of modern society.

Furthermore, the novelty of this article lies in its emphasis on the role of Islamic education, religious organizations, and the development of digital technology as intertwined factors in shaping the new face of modern Islamic thought in Aceh. Dayah and madrasah education are seen not only as a vehicle for the dissemination of religious knowledge but also as an environment for the evolution of Islamic principles adapted to contemporary conditions. Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and PUSA act as catalysts for change, engaging in da'wah (Islamic outreach) and the reform of educational and social institutions. Simultaneously, advances in digital technology offer new avenues for the accelerated, widespread, and interactive dissemination of Islamic thought, facilitating the exchange of Islamic ideas worldwide, which also influences the perspectives of Acehnese society. This article argues that contemporary Islamic thought in Aceh is significantly shaped by local historical experiences, including social conflict, the enforcement of Islamic law, and post-disaster reconstruction processes, all of which influence people's perceptions of the interaction between religion and social life. This article offers a detailed analysis of the formation and development of contemporary Islam in Aceh by integrating historical, social, educational, and technical factors. This methodology is a significant departure from previous research that largely emphasizes historical or institutional dimensions. This essay provides a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of contemporary Islamic thought in Aceh amidst ongoing transformation (Marwiyati, 2024).

Theoretical Review

Introduction to Modern Islamic Thought

Contemporary Islamic philosophy is an approach to interpreting Islamic teachings that prioritizes logic, contextuality, and Islam's adaptability to changing circumstances while maintaining the fundamental principles of sharia. Modern Islamic thought in academic studies emerged as a reaction to the challenges posed by modernity, including advances in science, technology, colonialism, and globalization, which have significantly impacted the Islamic world. This concept aims to portray Islam as a prescriptive religion that provides answers to contemporary social issues facing humanity. In Indonesia, contemporary Islamic thought developed through the influence of reformist figures from the Middle East, then was reinterpreted by local Muslim intellectuals to align with the socio-cultural context of society (Fauzi, 2022). In the Indonesian context, contemporary Islamic thought is seen as an intellectual and social movement advocating for changes in education, the legal system, and religious practices. This concept emphasizes the importance of *ijtihad* in addressing contemporary issues not explicitly addressed in traditional writings. Therefore, Islamic philosophy today is often associated with efforts aimed at reinterpreting Islamic doctrines to increase their relevance to the demands of modern society. This process illustrates the dichotomy between traditional Islamic traditions and the evolving needs of the contemporary era. (Syafri, 2023).

The Development of Modern Islamic Thought in Aceh (Educational Organizations and Institutions)

The development of modern Islamic thought in Aceh cannot be separated from the role of Islamic educational institutions, which have undergone a transformation from the traditional *dayah* system to a modern education system in the form of *madrasas* and Islamic universities. The *dayah*, which initially focused on traditional yellow text teaching, have undergone reforms by incorporating a general curriculum and more systematic learning methods. These changes demonstrate efforts to integrate religious knowledge and general knowledge to address the challenges of the modern era (Nurlaila, 2024). In addition to educational institutions, Islamic organizations also play a significant role in the dissemination of modern Islamic thought in Aceh. Organizations such as *Muhammadiyah* introduced a more structured modern education system, while the Aceh Ulema Association (PUSA) played a role in developing ideas for religious and social renewal. These two organizations have become the driving force behind the shift in mindset among Acehnese people, shifting from a traditional approach to a

more modern and open approach to scientific development. The presence of these organizations also strengthens Islam's position as a social force contributing to community development (Yusuf, 2022). Islamic universities, such as UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, have also played a crucial role in strengthening the development of modern Islamic thought. This campus serves as a center for Islamic studies, combining classical and modern approaches in Islamic academic studies. Through research activities, scientific discussions, and curriculum development, Islamic universities in Aceh contribute to producing a generation of Muslim intellectuals capable of critical and contextual thinking in understanding Islamic teachings in the modern era (Ibrahim, 2025)..

The Impact of Modern Islamic Thought in Aceh

The modernization of Islamic thought in Aceh has had a significant impact on social and religious change in society. One of the main impacts is the increasing openness of society to understanding Islamic teachings in a more flexible manner and less rigidly aligning with traditional interpretations. This has encouraged the emergence of a more rational mindset in addressing religious and social issues emerging in modern society (Sulaiman, 2022). Furthermore, Islamic modernization has also transformed the education system and social life of the Acehnese people. Islamic education is no longer limited to religious rituals but also encompasses the development of general knowledge aimed at creating human resources who are more competent and adaptable to changing times. This impact is evident in the growing number of Islamic educational institutions that integrate religious and scientific curricula in a balanced manner (Rahman, 2023). However, Islamic modernization also presents challenges in the form of shifts in traditional values that have long been an important part of Acehnese identity. Divergent views exist between traditionalist and modernist groups regarding the understanding of Islamic teachings, which in some circumstances has given rise to socio-religious dynamics. However, these differences can also be understood as part of the dynamic process of Islamic intellectual development which continues to develop in accordance with the demands of the times (Fitriani, 2024)..

Research Methods

This study employed a library research methodology, including the collection, examination, evaluation, and analysis of a variety of textual materials relevant to the subject, including books, scientific journals, research papers, and other academic texts on the history of contemporary Islamic thought in Aceh. This technique was used due to the absence of direct field

observations in this study, and emphasized data collection from a diverse range of existing literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of contemporary Islamic thought in Aceh over time (Zed, 2021). The choice of library research technique for this study was due to the historical and intellectual nature of the issue, making a literature review more appropriate than field research. This technique allowed the researcher to investigate a variety of sources of information from previous studies to understand the origins, evolution, and influence of contemporary Islamic thought in Aceh, including aspects such as education, Islamic organizations, and the socio-political context. This technique allowed the researcher to compare diverse academic perspectives, leading to a more comprehensive, methodical, and objective study of the topic under study (Sugiyono, 2022). The data collection method used in this study was documentation, namely by finding relevant literature, then recording, categorizing, and analyzing the contents of these sources. The collected data were then further analyzed using a qualitative descriptive analytical approach, namely by methodically outlining and explaining the evolution of contemporary Islamic thought in Aceh, based on ideas and findings from various literary sources. This research aims to systematically and scientifically enhance understanding of the dynamics of contemporary Islamic thought in Aceh. (Moleong, 2021)..

Research Results

The Beginning of the Entry of Modern Islamic Thought in Aceh

Modern Islamic thought in Aceh began to develop at the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century along with increasing interaction between Acehese ulama and Islamic scientific centers in the Middle East, especially Mecca, Medina and Cairo. During that time, many Acehese students and clerics studied at various leading Islamic educational institutions and interacted directly with Islamic reform figures who were developing in the Muslim world. Through this educational process, they become acquainted with various reform ideas that emphasize the importance of rationality, *ijtihad*, educational reform, as well as adapting Islamic understanding to social developments and modern science. Upon returning to Aceh, these ulama brought new ideas which then began to be introduced to society through recitations, *da'wah*, education and various socio-religious activities (Harahap, 2023). The entry of modern Islamic thought in Aceh did not happen suddenly, but through a long and gradual process. In the beginning, some people still maintained a pattern of religious understanding that was heavily influenced by local traditions and the *Dayah* education system which was oriented towards the study of classical books. However, developments over time and increasing relations with the outside world have

encouraged the emergence of awareness that Muslims need to reform in order to be able to face the challenges of modernity. In this context, the idea of Islamic modernism is seen as an effort to strengthen Muslims through improving the quality of education, developing science, and forming a more open mindset without abandoning the basic values of Islamic teachings (Hasanah, 2024).

The Dutch colonialism factor was also one of the backgrounds for the emergence of modern Islamic thought in Aceh. The long experience of the Acehnese people in facing colonialism has raised awareness of the importance of social reform and education as a means of strengthening the position of Muslims. Ulama began to see that the progress of Western nations was not only caused by military strength, but also by the development of science, technology and advanced education systems. Therefore, there is an urge to reform Islamic education so that it can produce a generation of Muslims who have strong religious knowledge and master modern science. This awareness later became an important foundation in the development of modern Islamic thought in Aceh. Apart from being influenced by educational factors and colonialism, the development of modern Islamic thought in Aceh was also influenced by the increasing social mobility of society. International trade that has been going on since the time of the Aceh Sultanate allows for the exchange of ideas between the people of Aceh and various Muslim communities from the Middle East, India and other Southeast Asian regions. This interaction broadened the religious insight of the Acehnese people and opened up space for the entry of new, more progressive thoughts. In such conditions, society begins to recognize reform concepts such as the importance of formal education, the development of religious organizations, and the need to reinterpret Islamic teachings in the face of continually developing social problems.

Modern Islamic thought that developed in Aceh in the early days was also marked by the emergence of criticism of several religious practices that were considered less in accordance with pure Islamic teachings. Reformers are trying to invite society to return to the Al-Qur'an and Hadith as the main sources of Islamic teachings, while encouraging the use of reason and *ijtihad* in understanding new problems that arise in society. Although initially this idea received resistance from some traditional circles, slowly modern thinking began to be accepted because it was considered capable of providing solutions to various social, educational and economic challenges faced by Muslims at that time. The development of modern Islamic thought in Aceh is also getting stronger with the emergence of a generation of Muslim intellectuals who not only master religious knowledge, but also have knowledge about the social, political and cultural conditions of society. They

became agents of change who played an important role in spreading reform ideas through writing, lectures, religious discussions, and the establishment of educational institutions. The presence of these intellectuals enriches the dynamics of Islamic thought in Aceh and creates a space for dialogue between local Islamic traditions and modern ideas developing in the Islamic world..

Table 1. Early Development of Modern Islamic Thought in Aceh

Period	Event	Main Characteristics	Impact
Late 19th century	Acehnese scholars studied in the Middle East	Renewal of religious understanding	Entry of Islamic modernist ideas
Early 20th century	Influence of Islamic reform movements	Criticism of traditional practices	Emergence of critical thinking
Colonial period	Socio-religious awareness	Islam as a social force	Strengthening of Muslim identity
Early independence	Modernization of Islamic education	Integration of religious and general sciences	Establishment of modern educational institutions
Mid-20th century	Emergence of modern Islamic organizations	Reform in da'wah and education	Spread of modernization ideas

Based on this table, it can be understood that the early development of modern Islamic thought in Aceh was a historical process that took place over a fairly long period. The interaction of Acehnese ulama with global centers of Islamic scholarship was a major factor in introducing reformist ideas into the lives of the Acehnese people. These ideas then developed through education, preaching, religious organizations, and social activities, gradually shifting the community's mindset from a highly traditional approach to a more rational, critical, and contextual understanding. This process gave birth to a new generation of Acehnese Muslim intellectuals who possessed the ability to connect Islamic teachings with the needs of modern society. They served not only as disseminators of religious knowledge but also as agents of social change, encouraging educational advancement, improving the quality of human resources, and strengthening the community's Islamic identity. Thus, the initial influx of modern Islamic thought in Aceh laid a crucial foundation for the development of contemporary Islam in Aceh, which continues to this day.

Development Through Islamic Education and Organizations in Aceh

The development of modern Islamic thought in Aceh is inseparable from the transformation of Islamic educational institutions that has been underway since the early 20th century. Education has become a key instrument in the process of disseminating and strengthening the ideas of Islamic renewal within Acehnese society. Before the influence of modernization, the Islamic education system in Aceh was dominated by dayah institutions, which functioned as centers of religious learning, focusing primarily on the study of classical texts (kitab kuning), Islamic jurisprudence (jurisprudence), monotheism (tawhid), Sufism (Sufism), and the science of tools such as grammar (nahwu) and sharaf (syntax). The learning system at dayahs generally remained traditional, with halaqah methods and teaching centered on the authority of the teungku (leader), or ulama (Islamic scholars), as the primary source of religious knowledge. With the development of Islamic renewal thought brought by Acehnese ulama educated in the Middle East, an awareness emerged that Islamic education needed to adapt to changing times. Education was no longer solely oriented toward mastering religious knowledge, but also needed to equip students with general knowledge that could help them face increasingly complex social, economic, and political challenges. Therefore, various Islamic educational institutions began reforming their curriculum by integrating general subjects such as mathematics, science, social sciences, Indonesian, and foreign languages. This transformation marked a significant milestone in the development of modern Islamic thought in Aceh, demonstrating the harmonization of religious knowledge and modern science (Nurlaila, 2024).

This change gave birth to a new educational model, the madrasah, which combines the Islamic education system with the modern one. The presence of madrasahs provided a more structured, systematic educational alternative that met the evolving needs of society. Madrasahs not only produced generations with a deep understanding of Islamic teachings but also produced human resources with intellectual abilities and skills relevant to modern developments. Throughout their development, madrasahs served as a bridge between classical Islamic educational traditions and the more modern national education system. In addition to madrasahs, the development of Islamic higher education institutions in Aceh also strengthened the current of modern Islamic thought. The presence of various Islamic higher education institutions, particularly UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, opened up a broader space for the development of academic, critical, and contextual Islamic studies. Islamic universities are not only centers for the development of religious knowledge, but also the birthplace of new ideas that seek to address contemporary societal issues through a multidisciplinary

approach. Through research, seminars, scientific publications, and academic discussions, Islamic universities play a vital role in shaping a generation of Muslim intellectuals capable of integrating Islamic values with advances in science and technology..

In addition to educational institutions, Islamic organizations have also made significant contributions to the development of modern Islamic thought in Aceh. These organizations serve as effective channels for disseminating reformist ideas through da'wah, education, social activities, and community empowerment. Muhammadiyah is one organization that has had a significant influence on the process of Islamic modernization in Aceh. This organization introduced a more structured modern education system, encouraged the use of rational learning methods, and emphasized the importance of purifying Islamic teachings based on the Quran and Hadith. Through schools, madrasas, hospitals, and other social activities, Muhammadiyah has successfully disseminated modern Islamic values to the wider Acehnese community. In addition to Muhammadiyah, the Aceh Ulema Association (PUSA) also plays a crucial role in promoting social and religious change in Aceh. This organization serves as a forum for ulama (Islamic scholars) to promote reform in education, da'wah, and social life. PUSA strives to develop a more progressive understanding of Islam while maintaining the strong Islamic identity of the Acehnese people. Through various educational programs and social activities, this organization contributes to raising public awareness of the importance of reform and progress in religious and social life. This transformation in education and the role of Islamic organizations has gradually transformed the mindset of the Acehnese people. Religious understanding, which previously tended to be textual, has begun to evolve into a more rational and contextual one. People no longer simply study religious texts literally but also strive to understand their goals and values for application in modern life. Thus, Islamic education and organizations have become key pillars in shaping the character of modern Islamic thought in Aceh, which is more open, critical, and adaptive to current developments..

Table 2. Development of Modern Islamic Thought in Aceh

Aspect	Change	Result
Education	Dayah → Madrasah → Universities	More modern education system
Organizations	Muhammadiyah & PUSA	Spread of reformist ideas
Curriculum	Religious + general sciences	Emergence of new Muslim intellectuals
Da'wah (Islamic	Traditional → modern	Wider dissemination of

preaching)		da'wah
Teaching	Halaqah → classical	More effective learning
Method	system	process
Educational	Print media → digital	Broader access to
Technology	media	knowledg

Based on the table, it is clear that the development of modern Islamic thought in Aceh took place through systematic changes in education and religious organizations. Educational modernization produced a generation of Muslims who not only possessed a strong understanding of religion but also were able to interact with developments in science and technology. Meanwhile, Islamic organizations functioned as agents of social change, expanding the dissemination of reformist ideas to various levels of society. This combination of modern education and Islamic organizational movements has become the primary foundation for the development of modern Islamic thought in Aceh to this day.

The Impact of Modern Islamic Thought in Aceh

The modernization of Islamic thought in Aceh has had a broad impact on various aspects of community life, including education, social, cultural, economic, and religious matters. These changes not only influence how people understand Islamic teachings but also influence patterns of social interaction and how they respond to the various challenges arising from modern developments. Islamic modernization has fostered a more open, rational, and contextual mindset in understanding various life issues. One of the most tangible impacts of the modernization of Islamic thought is the increasing openness of society to diverse religious views. While previously society tended to accept a view passed down through generations without much questioning of its underlying arguments, now more and more people are seeking to understand Islamic teachings through broader and more in-depth study. People are becoming accustomed to scientific discussions, academic studies, and religious dialogues, which foster a more critical and argumentative understanding. This condition demonstrates the development of a more dynamic intellectual culture in the religious life of the Acehnese people (Sulaiman, 2022).

In the field of education, Islamic modernization has resulted in significant changes to the learning system and orientation of Islamic education. Islamic educational institutions now serve not only as places for religious learning but also as a means of developing the knowledge and skills needed in modern life. The integration of religious and general knowledge enables the emergence of a generation of Muslims with both academic competence and a strong moral and spiritual foundation. This contributes to

improving the quality of Aceh's human resources, making them better prepared to face global competition (Rahman, 2023). In the social sphere, modern Islamic thought encourages the community to be more active in various social development activities. Islamic values are no longer understood solely in the context of worship rituals, but also serve as guidelines for building a more just, inclusive, and well-being-oriented social life. Various Sharia-based community empowerment, education, health, and economic programs have developed as part of the implementation of Islamic values in contemporary social life.

Islamic modernization has also impacted the economic development of Acehese society. The emergence of the concept of sharia economics, sharia financial institutions, sharia cooperatives, and various businesses based on Islamic principles demonstrates that modern Islamic thought has penetrated the economic sector. The understanding that Islam governs all aspects of life encourages society to develop economic activities that are not solely profit-oriented but also prioritize the values of justice, honesty, and the common good. However, the modernization of Islamic thought also presents various challenges. One major challenge is the emergence of differing views between traditionalist and modernist groups. These differences often arise in the interpretation of Islamic law, religious practices, and understanding the relationship between religion and modernity. Nevertheless, these dynamics are part of the normal process of intellectual development in a society that is constantly changing. The development of digital technology also presents both challenges and opportunities for the modernization of Islam in Aceh. Social media allows for the rapid and widespread dissemination of religious information, but at the same time opens up the possibility of unverified information and a less in-depth understanding of religion. Therefore, improving digital literacy and religious literacy is crucial so that society can use technology wisely to acquire Islamic knowledge.

Table 3. Impacts of Modern Islamic Thought in Aceh

Field	Positive Impact	Challenges
Social	More open society	Differences in viewpoints
Education	More advanced education system	Curriculum adaptation
Religious	More contextual understanding of Islam	Tradition–modernity conflicts
Thought	More rational and critical thinking	Polarization of interpretations
Economy	Growth of Islamic economy	Global economic competition
Technology	Wider access to information	Religious misinformation

Based on this table, it can be understood that the modernization of Islamic thought in Aceh has had a significant positive impact on societal development. However, this process also presents challenges that must be managed wisely to prevent social conflict or religious disorientation. Overall, Islamic modernization in Aceh is an ongoing process of transformation and is a crucial part of shaping the character of an Acehnese society that is religious, adaptive, and critical, and able to face global dynamics without losing its Islamic identity and local culture that have been passed down through generations.

Discussion

The development of modern Islamic thought in Aceh is essentially the result of a long process involving the interaction between local Islamic traditions and currents of Islamic renewal from outside, particularly from the Middle East. Historically, Aceh has long been known as a region with a strong Islamic base, so any changes in religious thought have always gone through a complex process of adjustment. Modern Islamic thought emerged as a response to the community's need for a more relevant understanding of religion in line with current developments, without abandoning the basic principles of Islamic teachings. This process demonstrates that Islamic modernization in Aceh was not a break with tradition, but rather a gradual and continuous process of adaptation (Hasanah, 2024). Subsequent developments have seen modern Islamic thought in Aceh heavily influenced by the role of Islamic educational institutions, particularly *dayah* and *madrasah*, which have undergone significant transformation. Previously traditional *dayah* schools have begun to open up to the modern education system by incorporating a general curriculum and more systematic learning methods. This change demonstrates an effort to integrate religious knowledge and modern science within a single educational system. This transformation not only impacted the quality of education but also shaped the mindset of the younger generation of Acehnese Muslims, making them more open, critical, and adaptive to social change (Nurlaila, 2024).

Beyond education, Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and PUSA also played a strategic role in strengthening the flow of modern Islamic thought in Aceh. Muhammadiyah is known for its reform movement in education and more systematic *da'wah*, while PUSA played a role in developing socio-religious awareness among the Acehnese people. Both organizations served as important platforms for the dissemination of modern Islamic ideas, which emphasize rationality, progress, and social renewal. The presence of these organizations demonstrates that Islamic modernization in Aceh is not only occurring at the intellectual level but also encompasses

broader social aspects (Yusuf, 2022). Socially, modern Islamic thought has had a significant impact on changing the mindset of the Acehnese people. The community has become more open to differing views in understanding religious teachings, while still maintaining deeply rooted traditional values. This change reflects a shift from a textual mindset to a more contextual and rational one. In practice, Islam is understood not only as a religious ritual but also as a value system that regulates the social, economic, and cultural life of society (Sulaiman, 2022).

However, the process of modernizing Islamic thought in Aceh is not without challenges. One major challenge is the emergence of differing views between traditionalist and modernist groups regarding the understanding of Islamic teachings. These differences often give rise to socio-religious dynamics within the community, particularly regarding worship practices and the interpretation of Islamic law. Furthermore, limited digital literacy and access to information in some regions also hinder the widespread dissemination of modern Islamic thought. This indicates that Islamic modernization is still an evolving process and is not yet fully complete (Fitriani, 2024). Developments in information technology and globalization have also significantly influenced the dynamics of modern Islamic thought in Aceh. Social media and digital platforms allow the public, especially the younger generation, to access diverse Islamic views from around the world more quickly and easily. This creates a broader space for discussion, but also has the potential to give rise to disinformation if not accompanied by adequate religious literacy skills. Therefore, a balance is needed between traditional and modern understanding of Islam so that there is no disorientation of thought in society (Nasution, 2025)..

Furthermore, Islamic modernization in Aceh has also contributed to the development of the educational and socio-economic sectors of the community. Islamic educational institutions are increasingly developing with more modern and integrated systems, thus producing more competent human resources. Furthermore, Islamic values are also beginning to be implemented in the economic system and public policy in Aceh, particularly in the concept of a sharia-based economy. This demonstrates that modern Islamic thought impacts not only religious aspects but also overall social development (Rahman, 2023). The novelty of this study lies in the understanding that the history of modern Islamic thought in Aceh can be seen not only as a process of intellectual change but also as the result of a complex interaction between historical factors, education, religious organizations, socio-cultural factors, and technological developments. This study emphasizes that Islamic modernization in Aceh is a dynamic and multi-layered process, in which traditional and modern values do not negate

each other but rather adapt to each other, shaping the distinctive, strong Islamic character of Acehese society that remains relevant to current developments (Marwiyati, 2024).

This article differs from the research conducted by Harahap et al. (2023), Yusuf et al. (2022), and Nurlaila (2024). Essentially, these studies focus more on the development of modern Islamic thought in Aceh from the perspective of Islamic educational institutions, curriculum changes, and the role of religious organizations in the process of reforming the Islamic education system. Harahap et al. discuss the network of Acehese ulama in disseminating Islamic reform ideas, Yusuf et al. examine the role of Muhammadiyah and PUSA organizations in the modernization of Islamic education, while Nurlaila (2024) focuses more on the transformation of dayah into modern madrasah. Meanwhile, this article has a broader scope because it not only examines modern Islamic thought from an educational and institutional perspective but also comprehensively examines the process of development of modern Islamic thought in Aceh, involving the interaction of social, cultural, political, and technological factors that gradually and continuously influence the thinking of Acehese Muslims (Harahap, 2023).

This article aligns with research conducted by Hasanah (2024), Maulana (2021), and Rahman (2023). Essentially, these studies all address the dynamics of socio-religious change in Acehese society in response to modern developments and the influence of modernization on the mindset of Muslims. Hasanah (2024) discusses the history of the development of Islam in Aceh, demonstrating a long process of interaction between local traditions and global Islamic thought. Maulana (2021) examines the socio-religious impact of the post-conflict and reconstruction of Aceh, which influenced people's perspectives on religion. Rahman (2023) examines the relationship between Islam and social change in Aceh within the context of modernization. This article also discusses a similar issue, namely changes in the Islamic mindset of Acehese society in facing the challenges of modernity, but with a more specific emphasis on the process of forming modern Islamic thought as a result of the interaction between Islamic education, religious organizations, and the social conditions of Acehese society that continue to evolve over time (Maulana, 2021)..

Furthermore, the novelty of this article lies in its discussion of the history of modern Islamic thought in Aceh, which is examined in a more comprehensive and integrative manner by connecting various interrelated dimensions, such as Islamic education, religious organizations, socio-political dynamics, local culture, and the influence of globalization and information technology in shaping the mindset of Acehese Muslims. This

article not only explains modern Islamic thought as an intellectual discourse, but also as a social process that lives and develops within society through interactions between ulama, educational institutions, Islamic organizations, and the wider community. Furthermore, this article emphasizes that modern Islamic thought in Aceh cannot be separated from the context of Aceh's long history as a center of Islamic civilization in the archipelago, possessing a strong and distinctive Islamic character.

Furthermore, another novelty lies in the discussion's focus on linking modern Islamic thought to the development of digital technology and information media, which accelerate the dissemination of Islamic ideas in the contemporary era. This demonstrates that modern Islamic thought in Aceh is not static, but continues to evolve in accordance with changing times. Thus, this article provides a new perspective that the modernization of Islam in Aceh is the result of a long process involving various internal and external factors that interact with each other, thus forming the character of Islamic thought that is more open, adaptive, and remains rooted in the strong and sustainable values of local Acehnese Islamic traditions (Marwiyati, 2024).

Conclusion

The history of modern Islamic thought in Aceh shows that the transformation of public perception of Islam occurred gradually, shaped by various internal and external influences. Contemporary Islamic philosophy in Aceh did not emerge suddenly; it is the product of extensive interaction between strong local Islamic traditions and Islamic renewal concepts from the Middle East. The participation of Islamic scholars, Islamic educational institutions, and religious organizations significantly strengthened this process by spreading the concept of Islamic modernization in Aceh. The evolution of contemporary Islamic thought in Aceh was primarily shaped by the transition of educational institutions from the traditional *dayah* system to modern *madrasahs* and Islamic universities. This change not only affected the educational framework but also influenced societal attitudes, encouraging a more open, rational, and contextual understanding of Islamic teachings. Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and PUSA significantly contributed to accelerating the modernization process through educational reforms and community service initiatives. The modernization of Islamic philosophy in Aceh also had significant social impacts on education, social dynamics, and religious practices. Society evolved to become more adaptable to contemporary changes while still preserving the traditional values that constitute the essence of Acehnese Islam. This process also presented complications due to ongoing disputes between conservative and modernist factions.

References

- Fauzi, M. (2022). Modern Islamic thought and socio-religious transformation in Indonesia. *Journal of Contemporary Islamic Studies*.
- Fitriani, N. (2024). Dynamics of traditional and modern Islamic thought in Acehese society. *Journal of Nusantara Islamic Studies*.
- Harahap, R. (2023). History of the development of Islamic intellectualism in Aceh. *Journal of Islamic History and Culture*.
- Hasanah, S. (2024). The transformation of modern Islamic thought in Aceh from a historical perspective. *Journal of Indonesian Islamic Education*.
- Ibrahim, A. (2025). The role of Islamic universities in the development of modern thought. *Journal of Islamic Academics*.
- Maulana, F. (2021). Islam and social change in Aceh: a historical-sociological study. *Journal of Social and Religious Studies*.
- Marwiyati, D. (2024). The dialectic of tradition and modernity in Acehese Islam. *Journal of Islamic and Cultural Studies*.
- Moleong, L. J. (2021). *Qualitative research methodology*. Bandung: Rosdakarya Youth.
- Nasution, A. (2025). Digital media and changes in Islamic thinking among the younger generation. *Journal of Islamic Communication*.
- Nurlaila, S. (2024). The transformation of dayah into madrasah in Islamic education in Aceh. *Journal of Islamic Education*.
- Rahman, T. (2023). Modernization of Islamic education and its impact on society. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*.
- Rizky, M. (2023). Globalization and changes in Islamic thought in Aceh. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*.
- Salam, R. (2024). Digital transformation of MSMEs and local economic change. *Journal of Indonesian Digital Economy*.
- Saleh, A., et al. (2024). The impact of the pandemic on the digitalization of MSMEs in Aceh. *Journal of Islamic Economics and Business*.
- Saputra, H., et al. (2024). Utilizing TikTok Ads in MSME marketing. *Journal of Digital Marketing Management*.
- Safrina, R., Dewi, N., & Hasanah, M. (2025). E-commerce and the increase in Gayo coffee sales. *Journal of Agribusiness and Digitalization*.
- Sulaiman, Y. (2022). Islamic modernization and social change in Acehese society. *Journal of Sociology of Religion*.
- Syafri, M. (2023). Ijtihad and the renewal of contemporary Islamic thought. *Journal of Ushuluddin*.
- Yusuf, H. (2022). The role of Muhammadiyah in modern Islamic education in Aceh. *Journal of Education and Da'wah*.
- Zed, M. (2021). *Library research methods*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia...